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Habitat III thematic meeting on informal settlements

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) hereby transmits the Pretoria Declaration of the Habitat III thematic meeting on informal settlements, held in Pretoria on 7 and 8 April 2016.

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Pretoria Declaration of the Habitat III thematic meeting on informal settlements

Context

1. Informal settlements[1] are a global urban phenomenon. They exist in urban contexts all over the world, in various forms and typologies, dimensions and locations. While urban informality is more present in cities in developing countries, housing informality and substandard living conditions can also be found in developed countries.

2. In 1996, when the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) was held, 4 out of every 10 people living in cities of the developing world lived in slums, and the alarming implications of rapid unplanned urbanization and slums were recognized in the Habitat Agenda.

3. In 2000, the international community agreed to prioritize the improvement of living conditions for slum dwellers under the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the great progress recorded between 2000 and 2014, when 320 million people were lifted out of informal settlement conditions, absolute numbers continue to grow globally.

4. Currently, there are around 1 billion slum dwellers worldwide, compared with three quarters of a billion in 1996. If curative and preventive policies are not initiated, sustained and upscaled, that figure is expected to increase threefold by 2050.

5. The continued existence of informal settlements is directly linked to the persistence of poverty and inequality and distorted land markets, excluding people from decent work and livelihood opportunities and the possibility of attaining individual and collective progress and prosperity.

6. Informal settlements are caused by a range of interrelated factors: population growth and rural-to-urban and international migration; poverty; basic service deficits; poor governance and policy frameworks; and limited access to financial markets, land and property.

7. People living in informal settlements are particularly vulnerable to spatial, social and economic inequalities, dependence on precarious income generation and livelihoods and poor health, as well as lack of affordable housing, high vulnerability to the adverse impacts of poor and exposed environments, climate change and natural disasters. Exclusion, discrimination and marginalization characterize life in

[1] Informal settlements are residential areas where: (a) inhabitants have no security of tenure vis-à-vis the land or dwellings that they inhabit, with modalities ranging from squatting to informal rental housing; (b) the neighbourhoods usually lack, or are cut off from, basic services and city infrastructure; and (c) the housing may not comply with current planning and building regulations and is often situated in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas. In addition, informal settlements can be a form of real estate speculation for all income levels of urban residents, affluent and poor. Slums are the most deprived and excluded form of informal settlements, characterized by poverty and large agglomerations of dilapidated housing, often located in the most hazardous urban land. In addition to tenure insecurity, slum dwellers lack formal access to basic infrastructure and services, public space and green areas and are constantly exposed to eviction and disease.

informal settlements, and are exacerbated by displacement, such as when caused by conflict, crisis, natural disasters and climate change.

8. The recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, a new transformative urban agenda, will have to address the above challenges, taking stock of the shortcomings and achievements of previous development frameworks and approaches.

Pretoria Declaration

We, the representatives of national Governments, local and regional authorities, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies and experts from civil society, community, grass-roots and women's organizations, farmers, professionals from academia, business and the private sector, older persons and youth from all parts of the world participating in the Habitat III thematic meeting on informal settlements in Pretoria on 7 and 8 April 2016,

1. *Express our sincere gratitude and appreciation* to the Government of South Africa for its excellent organization of the meeting and its commitment to co-host this event on the issue of informal settlements, which challenges inclusive urbanization in many countries and cities around the world;

2. *Recall* the outcomes of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provides a focus on cities through Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the specific target on slums (target 11.1, to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums), as well as other interlinked goals and targets across the whole Agenda;

3. *Recognize* the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, Goal 7.D, to achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, which has been achieved, although absolute numbers have been growing globally;

4. *Emphasize* that informal settlements, especially slums, are a cause and a consequence of poverty, social exclusion and environmental degradation;

5. *Acknowledge* the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing, as endorsed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its article 25 and other international conventions and declarations, such as the Habitat Agenda, to address the issue of informal settlements;

6. *Emphasize* that the New Urban Agenda, as an outcome document of Habitat III, should be an ambitious, robust, action-oriented and implementable agenda, and should be focused on inclusive cities, with equal opportunity effectively reflected in its principles, vision, strategies and priorities, and embrace the importance of participatory slum upgrading approaches in sustainable urbanization;

7. *Recognize* that informal settlements and, especially, slum-related issues, can be effectively addressed only if they are part of an integrated approach to sustainable urban development that takes into consideration national urban policy frameworks, the legal, financial and spatial aspects and, where applicable, planned

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city extensions and the consolidation, densification and efficient use of land in the overall urban fabric;

8. *Acknowledge* the role of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in supporting States in the implementation of the proposed New Urban Agenda, especially through the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme, the Global Land Tool Network, the Safer Cities Programme and the Public Space Programme and the Cities and Climate Change Initiative, among others, and specifically through the continuing focus on transforming the lives of slum dwellers and fostering cities and human settlements that are inclusive, promote equal opportunity and are sustainable;

9. *Take note* of resolution 24/7 of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat entitled "Making slums history: a worldwide challenge for 2020", adopted further to its conference held in Rabat from 26 to 28 November 2012, to review and share global progress in improving the living conditions of slum dwellers between 2000 and 2010 and to devise a strategy for inclusive, sustainable and prosperous cities;

10. *Recognize* that urban informality is also the result of dysfunctional urban land markets and policies, not simply a manifestation of poverty, and can be mitigated and forestalled through, among other things, land use and fiscal policies that promote diverse market solutions and provide avenues to address physical and social infrastructure issues, where applicable;

11. *Call for* the issue of evictions to be addressed in the New Urban Agenda in line with the recommendations of the United Nations in the basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement;

12. *Acknowledge* the prioritization of in situ upgrading to respond to the scale of urban poverty and at the same time strengthen socioeconomic and cultural dynamics for safe and sustainable neighbourhoods;

13. *Stress* that North-South, South-South, triangular, regional and international cooperation are crucial steps in improving national and local capacities in upgrading informal settlements and need to be strengthened through partnerships at all levels, learning exchanges, the preparation of case studies and the development of regional tools;

14. *Recommend* continuing to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with the private sector, community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations contributing to slum upgrading and initiating people-public-private-partnerships, with sound accountability mechanisms to ensure that all partnerships are subject to the community assessment of their social, economic and environmental impacts;

15. *Recognize* the human need for access to land for housing and livelihoods, as well as the social function of property (space, housing and habitat);

16. *Acknowledge and respond* to the gender, age, socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural diversity of the residents of informal settlements by using participatory, inclusive and institutionalized approaches when developing policy, legislation, planning and programme processes for urban development, slum upgrading and livelihood strengthening initiatives;

17. *Acknowledge* that women's multiple roles as family and community caregivers and income generators give rise to gender-specific needs that informal settlement upgrading and development must address in order to be effective and responsive and that women's tenure security is a cornerstone of women's empowerment and gender equality, and encourage public policies that promote women's safety in the public and private spheres;

18. *Recognize* that the health of slum dwellers, which is a fundamental precondition for development, depends not only on health services but on all aspects of the planning and management of cities;

19. *Acknowledge* the need for strong commitment by national and local governments to put in place the capacity needed to deliver urban planning, land governance and property development, especially in the technical, professional and science sectors, as well as with elected representatives and civil society, who are key to the successful outcome of participatory processes;

20. *Understand* that security of tenure (using the continuum of land rights), basic urban services and adequate housing can both prevent the creation of informal settlements and also be a prerequisite to sustainable incremental slum upgrading, triggering further investment in neighbourhoods from Governments, businesses and private households, and harnessing the land value increments, thereby enabling local investment, local economic development and local value addition;

21. *Stress* the importance of addressing the inequality among and within cities and between urban and rural areas, and call for policies to achieve more balanced and integrated territorial development in order to ensure a better standard of living;

22. *Recommend* that incremental upgrading and participatory approaches that institutionalize platforms and partnerships between national and local institutions and slum dwellers be promoted, together with flexible coordination and cooperation frameworks and multipronged financing mechanisms, involving communities, Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector;

23. *Also recommend* that strong coordination mechanisms, frameworks and structures at the national and local levels, including at the city and neighbourhood levels, be institutionalized, so as to steer proactive measures for the upgrading of informal settlements as a joint effort by all stakeholder groups, using all stakeholders and empowering them in their roles and responsibilities;

24. *Stress* that credible and timely data and research are necessary to recognize and understand the drivers and dynamics of urbanization and the situation in informal settlements, in order to further formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate upgrading programmes against the slum deprivations at the global, regional, national, city and community levels, while empowering local authorities and communities through decentralized data collection frameworks;

25. *Restate* the importance of human settlement statistics, indicators and mapping in the review and follow-up of the proposed implementation of the New Urban Agenda, placing a particular emphasis on dialogue between producers and users of data and promoting the allocation of sufficient resources by States and international cooperation agencies in order to compile pertinent, timely and reliable information;

26. *Stress* the need for comprehensive new financing frameworks, with a mix of instruments from international public and private institutions, Governments, the banking and finance sector, multilateral agencies and the people, to address the upgrading needs of settlements, utilizing existing and new financing mechanisms and options to leverage the value created through sustainable urban development, applied in combination with redistributive objectives and the continuum of land rights;

27. *Suggest* that governments at all levels, including local and regional authorities, explicitly and systematically integrate migration into their regular urban planning processes, both to take advantage of the opportunities that migration brings and to manage its challenges, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities;

28. *Stress the importance* of a new urban agenda that:

(a) Is sustainable and socially inclusive, promotes equality and combats discrimination in all its forms and empowers individuals and communities, as an opportunity to realize the human rights of all inhabitants;

(b) Advances inclusive urban, land, fiscal and housing policies, legislation and governance frameworks, by applying participatory urban planning, local development and finance approaches to empower the people living in informal settlements, and promotes equal social and economic access;

(c) Empowers women living in informal settlements by increasing their public leadership in upgrading housing, basic services and public space in their communities, providing gender-responsive tenure security and land rights and investing in livelihood, enterprise and credit initiatives to measurably their improve economic status;

(d) Transforms informal settlements through incremental participatory slum upgrading, including evidence-based, pro-poor and inclusive urban and housing strategies and related regulatory frameworks recognizing people living in informal settlements, tackling the formation of new slums and the improvement of existing slum-like conditions through incremental upgrading and affordable housing;

(e) Strengthens local government and improves urban governance and management in a measurable way, distributing benefits and advantages to all inhabitants through transparent and accountable decision-making and public administration processes that include the establishment of coordinated frameworks which foster a collaborative, participatory process to improve living conditions in informal settlements, incrementally upgrading existing slums and preventing the formation of new slums;

(f) Adopts participatory urban planning and design, guiding urban development and renewal in a way that ensures access to adequate and affordable housing, infrastructure and basic urban services for all, in particular for people living in poverty, women, children, youth, older persons, people with disabilities and vulnerable households, thereby guiding the transformation of informal settlement neighbourhoods into inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable settlements with access to affordable basic services, including safe drinking water, sanitation, energy, food security, health care, education, transport and adequate public spaces, as well as stimulating productivity and promoting incentives for livelihood and decent employment;

(g) Recommends the development of strong urban planning and land use strategies, such as guidelines for minimum planning standards, in order to improve understanding of and responses to the challenge of providing adequate housing, the demarcation of spaces for social and cultural activity and the preservation of the multi-use function of community and public space in slum contexts with a view to promoting economic, social and cultural capital, including fostering public policies that promote urban farming, which is a pathway to food security;

(h) Considers encouraging States to establish procedures and regulations in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations in its basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement and offers a continuum of tenure security for slum dwellers, and thereby progressively advances the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing, leaving no one behind;

(i) Adequately equips national, subnational and local authorities, as well as slum dwellers, with strategic partnerships for sustained and affordable financing strategies for participatory incremental sustainable slum upgrading and prevention, including technical support for finance and line ministries, and the empowerment of local authorities, through appropriate resource allocation from national and local budgets, and informal settlements' own-source revenue collection, further making communities more financially resilient through savings groups, and community-managed funds, where livelihood initiatives by slum dwellers are made more sustainable and are strengthened;

(j) Supports economic vibrancy and diversity and ensures access to income opportunities and sustainable livelihoods, existing and new opportunities for decent work and enterprise in the local economy, across the formal and informal sectors, through, inter alia, education, vocational training and skills development, access to finance and/or sponsorship and simplified administrative procedures for the aspiring self-employed and entrepreneurs;

(k) Promotes strategies that enhance social cohesion among communities living in informal settlements by, among other things, ensuring inclusive participation, equal opportunity and transparency;

29. *Commit ourselves* to promoting the principles and the recommendations included in the present Declaration, thereby ensuring that it effectively contributes to the formulation of the New Urban Agenda at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in Quito in October 2016.